



## **Policy Statement on Developing Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) in Myanmar**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Under the implementation of TA 8163 REG: Implementing Greater Mekong Sub-region Core Agriculture Support Program, Phase 2 - CASP 2's output 1: strengthened regional policy framework and capacity for enhanced market access of safe and environmentally-friendly agri-food products (SEAP), the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) has been introduced in Myanmar since October 2014. Two PGS pilots were established in Thekawgyi Village, Lewe Township in Nay Pyi Taw and Kamarphayone Village, Daik U Township in Bago Region under the First round of Letter of Agreement (LOA) between the Department of Agriculture (DOA), Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation (MOALI) and Asian Development Bank (ADB) during February 2015 to June 2016.

Moreover, the development of PGS in Myanmar was done in collaboration with the Myanmar Organic Growers and Producers Association (MOGPA) under the Myanmar Fruit, Flower and Vegetable Producers and Exporters Association (MFVP). MOGPA provides PGS awareness trainings together with organic agriculture techniques to farmers in collaboration with DOA almost all the States and Regions in Myanmar since 2014 to date. However, there is still a requirement in the development of national PGS in Myanmar through common understanding of how PGS benefits to smallholders. It emphasizes quality assurance of agri-food products and working together with groups of smallholder farmers. Realizing that the PGS is a community-orientated certification system that encourages climate-friendly agri-produce smallholders to form a network of producers, consumers, and other stakeholders, it hopes to build a credible

certification system following the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movement (IFOAM) Standards and Guidelines.

Furthermore, DOA has developed 15 kinds of crops for Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) followed by ASEAN GAP Guidelines on fruit and vegetables. Together with GAP and third-party certification, PGS is part of a quality management landscape that contributes to the institutionalization of a “quality assurance mindset” at all levels. The development of this process takes time and requires government and private sector to commit resources to establish robust systems underpinned with a high level of accountability. The development of PGS in Myanmar has created a momentum to upscale PGS practices incorporating to the implementation of Myanmar’s Agriculture Development Strategy 2018-2019 to 2022-2023.

## **RATIONALE**

Food safety issues in Myanmar has been significantly considered as a national agenda. The Ministries of Health and Sports; Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation; Information; and Commerce have been promoting consumer awareness on food safety especially in the quality of imported foods and locally produced foods which are safe. However, it only emphasizes on a few items such as inspection on covering date of imported food items, usage of chemicals including dyed agri-food products etc. The importance of raising awareness for safe agri-food production by smallholder farmers along the whole supply chains are concerned with the small volume of safe products, low quality, poor postharvest handling, poor infrastructure and contamination from pathogens. To help solve these concerns, the PGS certification must address not only on-farm production but also aims to secure the integrity of products from farm to table.

Because the supply chain issues extend beyond the farm gate and are usually out of the farmer’s control, all the supply chain actors must be engaged to ensure that consumers can buy safe and organic food. A national coordination body for PGS will require having representatives of farmers, private sector, and government including academic institutions. The Myanmar PGS will develop policy and guidelines based on the IFOAM Standard and ASEAN Standard for Organic Agriculture to ensure effective certification of safer organic food in consistent with harmonization of Regional and Sub-regional Standards.

## **CONSISTENCY WITH THE GMS STRATEGY ON SEAP AND SIEM REAP ACTION PLAN AND MYANMAR’S AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

The emerging support for PGS certification in Myanmar is part of a similar trend in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS). The GMS Strategy on SEAP and Siem Reap Action Plan 2018-2022 recently endorsed by the six Ministers of Agriculture of the GMS aims at establishing the GMS as a leading global supplier of safe and environmentally-friendly agro-based value chains. The promotion of PGS approach to certification or organic food is consistent with the GMS Strategy and Siem Reap Action Plan.

The support for PGS certification in Myanmar is interrelating to the Myanmar Agriculture Development Strategy (ADS) 2018-2019 to 2022-2023 which was officially launched in June 2018 in Nay Pyi Taw with the vision of “an inclusive, competitive, food and nutrition secure and sustainable agriculture system contributing to the socio-economic well-being of farmers and rural people and further development of national economy”. The implementation of ADS comprises of 6 sub-committees at the National ADS Coordination Committee (NADSCC)

among them the Coordination Sub-committee on Food Safety will coordinate food safety issues arising at different stages of the supply chain.

### **POLICY DIRECTIONS WITHIN GMS**

The promotion of PGS in Myanmar is guided by the following policy directions within GMS:

1. Promote the ASEAN Standard on Organic Agriculture as the minimum standard required for producing organic products in the GMS;
2. Recognize PGS alongside other organic certification systems as a certification for produce and products sell in domestic and potentially other GMS markets;
3. Elaborate the PGS Guidelines by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movement (IFOAM) based on the definition of PGS and any legal approval requirements on the PGS definition, key features, key elements, and characteristics;
4. Consider promoting the PGS as voluntary (within the national regulation) where operators have the right to use an official national organic PGS logo and to access markets. Operators who are not certified as PGS under the regulation may still be able to make organic claims, but may not use the official PGS logo or statements (such as “certified in accordance with the national organic PGS regulation”) to do so;
5. Establish a national PGS coordinating body that actively engages government and private sector stakeholders in the national coordination of PGS. Roles of this body could include managing a PGS registration system, maintaining a PGS database, providing standards and guidelines to new PGS, managing a PGS logo, approving farm inputs, issuing certificates, and auditing PGS that want to register with the national PGS program;
6. Support and encourage the promotion of PGS to retailers, traders, and consumers in local markets; and
7. Include PGS-certified products in the government’s food safety sampling and residue testing program. Engage with other GMS countries to facilitate cross-border trade in PGS-certified products.

### **OBJECTIVE OF THE POLICY ON PGS**

To establish PGS as a community-orientated certification system for safe organic foods. This aims to enable the PGS National Coordination Body to establish a local quality assurance system for the certification of producers based on active participation of stakeholders and built on a foundation of trust, social networks and knowledge exchange.

### **SCOPE OF THE POLICY ON PGS**

1. Support the PGS National Coordinating Body (NCB) to develop and function as a Public Private Community Partnership (PPCP) coordinated by DOA, MOALI;
2. Develop a (voluntary) PGS Registration System that is managed by the NCB;
3. Promote the quality assurance of organic PGS certified products to be in conformity with the IFOAM - International PGS Guidelines;
4. Support and encourage the promotion of PGS to retailers, traders, and consumers in local markets;

5. Include PGS certified products in the Government's Food Safety sampling and residue testing program;
6. Promote the recognition of the Myanmar PGS within the GMS countries in order to help facilitate cross border trade in PGS certified products and develop new markets; and
7. Support a pilot for a Public Private Community Partnership arrangement that enables PGS groups to improve access to credit at lower interest rates.

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